

Interracial News Service

A DIGEST OF TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN HUMAN RELATIONS

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OVERSEAS PRESS RE TILL CASE

Europe's reaction to the trial and verdict in Sumner, Miss., was swift, violent and universal. There was total and unqualified condemnation of the court proceedings, of the weakness of the prosecution, the behavior of the jury and the judge, and at the verdict of acquittal.

Europe's condemnation came from all sections of public opinion, all political directions, and was expressed immediately and spontaneously. Surprisingly, on this occasion the Communists were less vociferous than many of the liberal and conservative elements. These protestations were expressed in hundreds of newspaper editorials, statements by public leaders in every country of Western Europe, and by men in the street.

The proceedings of the trial were reported prominently and at great length in the daily newspapers. Seldom has a trial at such distance been reported so extensively. The descriptive and detailed reports were accompanied by dramatic photos of the court sessions.

The first reaction was astonishment that such a trivial beginning should have such tragic results. A typical expression of this reaction was the short inscription under a series of pictures in the Parisian illustrated weekly, *Radar*. Under the headline "Lynched for having admired a white woman", this paper said:

It is impossible to believe, but alas, like many other exceptional crimes, this one is authentic. At Sumner in the state of Mississippi, a young Negro, Emmett Till, 14 years old, whistled in admiration at the young white woman, Mrs. Bryant. In Europe, this is a homage which provokes a smile. Here it was the equivalent of a death sentence. The husband of Mrs. Bryant, and his half-brother, Milam kidnapped Emmett and after ignoble tortures threw him into the river. The twelve jurors, all white, acquitted them. This shows that racial prejudice is still very strong in the U. S., primarily in the South. To such a point that in the course of the proceedings, Negro journalists were not permitted to sit near the white ones, while the accused joked with the audience. This verdict of letting loose two assassins can be explained but not justified by the atmosphere of racial hatred against Negroes which prevails in the entire South of the United States.

Another Parisian weekly, *Aux Ecoutes*, summed up the trial and its background in even stronger terms:

Never was there a more abominable travesty of the truth. The assassins presented themselves with weapons to the house from which the child was kidnapped. This violent act is recognized, for after being acquitted they will, it seems, be prosecuted for kidnapping. The mother of the child formally recognized her son. The odious personality whom the child admired by whistling, a sign of admiration in the United States, has invented words which he is supposed to have said, although at the beginning she only said that he whistled. Imagine a Negro who permits himself to admire a white woman, and what a woman. A cruel shrew, who calls two men to take revenge for the outrage, accepts the massacre and accompanies her two miserable men who kidnap the child. And this jury, which in spite of overwhelming proof acquits the two monsters, proving thereby that it consisted of men who are worth no more than the accused. And the judge who permits that the two criminals hold on their knees two children who are being taught to hate the Negroes. And this press which relegates Negro journalists to a place from where they cannot see anything. And this country where no wave of indignation emerged after the acquittal.

The most prominent Parisian afternoon paper characterized the trial more moderately (*Le Monde*):

It is true that the accusation was technically weak. Owing to the lack of material means and handicapped at the beginning by a solidarity of the whites, the prosecution did not present sufficient objective conclusions to bring about a condemnation. What is much more serious is the sloppiness and the speed with which the defendants were judged and acquitted without the police having pushed the interrogations far enough. What was ignoble was the impudence of the defense, which in its desire to prove that the case was produced in order to defile the customs of the South, doubted the testimony of the young mother Till . . . The white order continues to reign in Mississippi.

The news about the verdict was featured by the entire press and the most frequent words in the headlines were "Scandalous", "Monstrous" and "Abominable".

The comments varied in tone and intensity. Some limited their condemnation to the section in the South where the trial took place; others blamed the entire South for its segregation policies and the atmosphere of racial hatred which could produce such a trial; many others, on the basis of the trial and the verdict, raised sharp doubts about the sincerity of the U. S. in proclaiming itself as the defender of human rights and of oppressed peoples throughout the world.

Some elements in all these comments deserve particular emphasis. One is that the effects of the Supreme Court decision on desegregation which was widely reported and commented upon in Europe after it was rendered, were to a great extent annulled by the events in Mississippi. Many commentators pointed out that while the Supreme Court decision and the policies of the Federal administration aim to abolish racial barriers, the facts of life as illustrated by the Mississippi trial tell another and more poignant story.

Said *Le Phare* of Brussels, Belgium:

The southern states have refused to take account of the Supreme Court decision and all those who supported it were the object of such pressures that they have changed their attitudes. Employees who applied the decision lost their positions, merchants have seen their clients disappear. The decree of the Supreme Court was an error because it arose from abstract and ideological principles incompatible with the social realities of the southern states.

Franc-Tireur, anti-Communist liberal daily of Paris, said:

It is disquieting to see that in spite of the American laws condemning anti-Negro racism, the vilest passions can triumph unpunished under cover of the law of a state. Thus, there is still in certain corners of a great democracy a racist dogma of state, as anti-Semitism was a state dogma under Hitler and the confession trials under Stalin. We, who have always rejected with some horror enslavement and assassination of men, no matter under what pretext, only because of their thoughts, their opinions, their origin or their color, how can we not be shocked by this new evidence of the rage of the whites? Racism like Hitlerism is still spreading its poison over the world.

La Giustizia of Rome, the daily newspaper of the right-wing Socialist Party of Italy, the leader of which, Mr. Saragat, is Vice-Prime Minister, commented:

It is far from our intention to accuse the entire judiciary system of America, or to make generalized accusations about its people and their deep savagery. However, it is only too

clear and evident that as long as such cases call world attention to the painful and at the same time ignoble scar of racism, still so alive in the U. S., we cannot but reserve judgment on North American civilization.

And so that our judgment may not seem excessively hard, it is opportune to report the opinion of . . . Channing Tobias, president of the NAACP. "The unworthy and shameful verdict," said Dr. Tobias, "and such actions, bring mortal wounds to American democracy." And we, sincere admirers of many aspects of the "American way of life," agree in this case . . .

Obviously, the Communist press used this trial to launch general attacks against the U. S. and its "hypocrisy" in the attempt to lead the free world in the struggle against oppression.

Said *Das Freies Volk* of Dusseldorf:

The life of a Negro in Mississippi is not worth a whistle. This verdict is again a sign of American Democracy. Knowing that in the U. S. every hysterical woman can send a Negro to the electric chair by claiming that she was insulted, it is not surprising that until now no white man was ever sentenced to death in Mississippi because he killed a Negro. Dulles and the other roving preachers of American democracy and freedom who babble about the "American way of life" and who want to make us their satellites, have thrown a heavy veil over such freedom and democracy.

L'Humanite, the Communist daily of Paris, ran a series of articles in the same vein, and did not omit to refer to the McGee and Rosenberg trials. It said:

The two brutes of Mississippi whose guilt was not questioned by any Yankee newspaper, were acquitted on "benefit of doubt," but neither the innocent Rosenbergs nor Willie McGee benefited from such a doubt. The outcries of joy by the audience at Sumner when the verdict was announced will join in the folklore of American civilization with the indecent manifestations of the madmen who shouted "Hang Them" at the time of the Rosenberg trial. And this civilization still pretends to be superior. It is this time superior in crime.

The Communist daily, *Le Drapeau Rouge* of Brussels, carried similar material.

Said *L'Aurore*, the rightist, pro-Gaullist Parisian daily, in an editorial entitled "Shameful Verdict at Sumner":

This trial does not serve the cause of the U. S. throughout the world. The highest authorities of Washington may stigmatize racial segregation. However, between their pompous declarations and reality there is the corpse of this mutilated young Negro. Each country has its own justice, too rigid in England, too slow perhaps in France, but what took place in this American state has nothing to do with justice. It is an attack on human dignity pure and simple . . . When one pretends to give lessons constantly to others, when one is interested in oppressed peoples, one should start by watching what takes place in one's own house.

Figaro, the most prominent French morning newspaper, made this point even clearer by saying:

For some time many voices in America have been raised in the name of morale and justice in condemnation of the actions of colonialist France. It would be good that in the light of the verdict of Sumner, our friends in America, and even those who do not like us, should reconsider the question. We would like to know that important voices in America have been raised to deplore the verdict of Sumner. We are absolutely sure that a similar crime would not have found an indulgent jury in France. Let the preachers and the advisors on the other side of the Atlantic stop for one moment. Let them look at their own door. They will then see this innocent victim and the applauded criminals.

Le Populaire, Socialist daily of France, in an editorial entitled "Being Black is a Crime", said:

The problem is the eternal problem of colonialism, which is a manifestation of the eternal problem of racism. Colonialism is a problem in France, or was yesterday in Great Britain, whose colonies are overseas. The essential difference is that the U. S. has its colony in the very interior of the country, while a third kind of empire, the USSR, has it on the borders . . . Not too many Frenchmen have the right to give lessons to Americans in this area. However, certain Americans have a

tendency to give lessons to others before having swept before their own door.

Le Peuple, the Socialist daily of Brussels, deplored the proceedings at Sumner also for the reason that this will serve as an excuse to the colonial powers who are now on the defensive and make it possible for them to say that even in the U. S., the leading democratic power in the world, there is racial discrimination.

The *Libre Artois* of Arras emphasized this point by referring to the verdict at Sumner as follows:

Is not this a particularly odious manifestation of the colonialism that numerous Americans are so prompt to denounce in others — often, alas, with justice, but sometimes with a total lack of humility?

It is interesting that this reproach to America for criticising other nations on racial policies was expressed not only by French publications but by Belgian and Swiss. Said *Nation Belge* of Brussels:

One is astonished that in the U. S., where there was elaborated the new Charter of the Rights of Man, for all men regardless of their color, there can still take place such an event a century after publication of "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

And the *Gazette de Lausanne*:

A new war of secession is exacerbating spirits and inciting provocations. The jury of Sumner had defied the White House and world opinion . . . Colonialism, if not colonization, cannot find its justification in the regime which is born of the same motives and the same interests.

And the *Liberte* of Fribourg, Switzerland:

One is entitled to express surprise that such a denial of justice be permitted in a state which does not cease to offer its councils of virtue to European nations and to plead in favor of emancipation and equality of rights for colored races.

In addition, many French writers, intellectuals and artists voiced their protests in statements to newspapers, particularly through the anti-Communist daily *Combat*. The Catholic philosopher, Gabriel Marcel said: "It is a racist judgment." Gerard Bauer of the Goncourt Academy, commented: "The sentence rendered is of such flagrant injustice that it is impossible not to feel it as a painful blow against human dignity." Georges Duhamel of the Academie Francaise, said: "When a crime is a racial crime I consider it particularly abominable, because men are men no matter what the color of their skin."

And finally, a significant voice came from North Africa. *L'Action*, the official publication of the Neo-Destour, the leading nationalist party of Tunisia which is now in power, had this to say about the Sumner trial:

It is not enough for the U. S. to present itself verbally as the champion of liberty and justice. It is not enough for them to complain about the fate of unfortunate countries that are "oppressed by the Communist regime." If these are their real preoccupations, then they should be accompanied by internal policies directed in the same sense . . . This verdict is a shameless scandal which stains the justice of the U. S. It is one of those inequities that history does not forgive.

These are only a few examples of the unanimous and violent reaction of Europe to the Mississippi trial. They can be multiplied a hundredfold.

(Memorandum from American Jewish Committee, October 7)

TWO-WAY INTEGRATION SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE THROUGH NSSFNS

What is NSSFNS?

The National Scholarship Service and Fund for Negro Students is an independent agency established to increase higher educational opportunities for qualified Negro students in interracial colleges.

What does NSSFNS do?

Mainly for high school students who are college candidates but also, to a lesser extent, for preparatory school candidates and graduate students, NSSFNS:

1. Provides a counselling and college advisory service to thousands of students each year through their schools and guidance counsellors.

2. Offers supplementary scholarship help to its successful advisees who have been awarded insufficient college scholar-

ships — thus bridging a gap to make it possible for students to take advantage of college scholarships which they have earned in competition.

3. To accomplish 1. and 2., NSSFNS maintains a close working relationship with several thousand high schools and several hundred colleges, largely through staff field visiting.

What is "Two-Way" Integration?

NSSFNS has recently extended its services to BOTH white and Negro students who wish to attend colleges located in southern states which up to recently were altogether racially segregated.

In the past two or three years a new and different kind of college educational opportunity has been opened in these states. Many colleges previously limited in enrollment to either Negro or white students, have voluntarily opened their doors to students of the other race. These newly-created opportunities can mean much to the college education of those students who wish to take advantage of them.

Some of the interesting aspects for a student who makes such a college choice are:

1. As a pioneer in this movement, he may, if he is qualified and eligible, receive much more financial assistance than he might at a segregated college or at one in which the interracial pattern is already firmly established.

2. He may be able to attend a college nearer his home or one that offers superior courses in the field in which he is especially interested.

3. He can be a part of the movement to break down the barriers of segregation, discrimination, and prejudice which do not belong and should never have existed in our democracy.

4. He can get to know and make friends with others who happen to have skin of a different color. College friendships of this kind can favorably affect his future life.

5. If his life work is to be in the field of teaching, religion, or the social sciences, he can learn about intergroup relations and sociological problems not only academically, in the classroom, but in the reality of the campus-laboratory.

What is the NSSFNS "Two-Way" Integration Project?

The project involves advisory help for both Negro and white high school juniors and seniors of both sexes who wish to enter colleges, mostly in the South, which desire to begin or to expand their interracial enrollment. Negro and white students who apply for this service will be told about colleges, predominantly of the other race, which seem to meet their educational qualifications, needs, and aspirations and offer scholarship help for which they are eligible.

From these students there will be selected a limited number of both Negro and white boys and girls chosen for all-round excellence, as well as for their demonstrated or potential ability to adjust to a newly interracial environment.

If he is selected as one of this group and is admitted to one of these interracial colleges and awarded a scholarship by the college which is not large enough to meet his total needs, the National Scholarship Service and Fund for Negro Students will grant him supplementary scholarship assistance which will enable him to cover the balance of his college expenses.

Who is eligible for the NSSFNS "Two-Way" Integration Project?

Students who wish to participate in this program should realize that they will be chosen only because it appears that both they and the institution which they will attend will profit by the experience. To be selected will be both an honor and a responsibility: an honor, because it will mean recognition that one has been chosen as a qualified agent for human betterment; a responsibility because one's success will mean much, both to the group he is joining as well as the group he represents.

Applications for scholarship assistance are now being accepted for the school year beginning September, 1956. For application forms and additional information write to either: Mr. Richard L. Plaut, Executive Vice-Chairman, National Scholarship Service and Fund for Negro Students, 6 East 82nd Street, New York, N. Y.; or, Alfred S. Kramer, Associate Executive Director, Department of Racial and Cultural Relations, National Council of Churches, 297 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.

RACE RELATIONS SUNDAY MESSAGE

The Message for Race Relations Sunday, February 12, 1956, is from Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, President of the National Council of Churches. In the Message, titled "Christ's Challenge — The Church With an Open Door," Dr. Blake says:

"What will shake us out of the complacency that allows us in our churches and in our nation to go on treating people as inferior to us on account of such irrelevances as color of skin or form of feature or accent of speech?

"Although the demands of the times force us to adjust our racial practices, rational arguments as such seem to move us little. We know that intelligence is not dependent on racial heritage. We know the individual's creative powers are not the monopoly of any race. We know these things in our minds but we do not act according to our knowledge. . . .

"There is, of course, a need to speak to the whole world of the judgment of God, but the nature of the Gospel lays upon those who claim the name of Christ an even heavier burden of responsibility for action. Every Christian church today must ask itself these questions: Is our church door really open to all people for whom Christ died? What steps must we take now to show our repentance for the sins of our church with regard to race? Is our church's communion a foretaste of the fellowship of all God's children in the Kingdom of Christ?

"I urge every church to think about these questions and answer them with action in the full light of the Gospel."

One of the challenges confronting the churches is that of achieving racially inclusive membership and ministry. The Department of Racial and Cultural Relations is anxious to have you cooperate in seeing that the Message receives as wide distribution as possible. Copies are available from the Department of Racial and Cultural Relations, 297 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y. Prices: 4¢ each. \$2.00 per 100.

REIGN OF TERROR

In Mississippi

A Negro active in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said . . . he was shot by white men who fired from an automobile parked outside his rural grocery . . .

Gus Courts, 65-year-old former president of the Belzoni (Miss.) chapter of the NAACP, told physicians in a Mound Bayou hospital he had been shot by "some white men" and that they had fled in an automobile. Mr. Courts said he had not recognized them. . . .

The sheriff said Mrs. Courts, 42, in the store at the time of the shooting, told him she had not gone either to the door or window and had not seen the men who did the shooting.

Mr. Shelton said another witness, a Negro customer named Savannah Lubon, 42, told him she saw "one man, either a light Negro or a white man, in the driver's seat" of the gunman's car. . . .

Belzoni, a town of 4,000, mostly Negroes, in Mississippi's rich, agricultural delta, was the center of a controversy over the death of the Rev. George W. Lee, a Negro minister and NAACP leader, earlier this year.

Mr. Lee died May 7 following an automobile accident. However, two Negro physicians, Dr. C. C. Battles of Indianola, and Dr. Cyrus Waldin of Yazoo City, and a Negro dentist, Dr. A. H. McCoy of Jackson, reported they had found lead pellets in Mr. Lee's face.

NAACP leaders, including Dr. McCoy, who was president of the state organization, insisted Mr. Lee had been shot.

A coroner's inquest returned no decision, however, leaving the case open. Sheriff Shelton described it as "still baffling." No arrests were made.

On May 21 the Justice Department said it had asked the Federal Bureau of Investigation to investigate the death. . . .

Later in the summer, Mr. Courts charged whites were applying economic pressure by raising his rent to force him out of his grocery for advocating Negro voter registration in Humphreys County. He moved across the street. . . .

Neither white nor Negro leaders could provide a direct motive for the shooting. . . .

"Just being a member of the NAACP is the only motive I know of," Medgar Evers of Jackson, Miss., state NAACP field secretary said.

Belzoni is about forty miles from the place where the body of a young Negro was found in the Tallahatchi River three days after Emmett Till, 14, of Chicago, was abducted from his uncle's home by two white men who accused him of "wolf whistling" at the wife of one of them. The men were acquitted of young Till's slaying. . . .
(*New York Times*, November 27)

In South Carolina

Spectators in Felony Court (in New York City) were so moved by the story of how a Negro minister was persecuted by white people in the South that many went forward to shake his hand after his arraignment as a fugitive from South Carolina.

Among them were a court officer and a detective who had custody of the clergyman.

The 56-year-old minister was the Rev. Joseph A. DeLaine, pastor of St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church in Lake City, S. C. His church was burned to the ground by persons who opposed his views on school desegregation.

Richard E. Carey, the clergyman's attorney, told Magistrate Samuel J. Ohringer that on October 10 "a caravan of eight cars carrying members of the Ku Klux Klan" surrounded Mr. DeLaine's home and fired at him and his wife.

Mr. DeLaine fired back, Mr. Carey said, and he and his wife fled. Among those who fired upon the minister, Mr. Carey went on, was a Sheriff to whom he had appealed for help after an earlier incident.

Mr. Carey outlined to Magistrate Ohringer the history of Mr. DeLaine's "flight from injustice." He said that in 1949 the preacher had received warnings in Clarendon County, S. C., that he would be "carried out in a pine box" if he didn't leave the county.

The clergyman, he said, went to Summerton, S. C., where his house was burned down because of his belief that white and Negro children should share the same classroom, Mr. Carey said.

He then fled to Lake City, where he was when the Supreme Court handed down its ruling banning segregation.

"In September a caravan of cars, from which bricks and bottles were thrown, surrounded the minister's home," Mr. Carey told the court. "Every window in the house was broken. He got the license plate number of one car and reported it to the Sheriff.

"The Sheriff told him that maybe he didn't see too well and next time he should fire at the cars, 'and if we find a bullet hole we'll know.' No one in the minister's family could walk on the streets.

"Finally, on October 6, his church was burned down and he was warned that he would be carried out in a coffin if he continued his 'dirty, filthy poison' because several hundred persons were pledged to put him where "you belong if there is such a place."

Four days later the shooting incident occurred and that same Sheriff was among those who tried to kill the minister and his wife, Mr. Carey declared.

Mr. Carey said that the clergyman, and later his wife, found their way to (New York, N. Y.) and had been given shelter by the Right Rev. D. Ward Nichols, Presiding Bishop of the church's New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania district. Bishop Nichols stood beside Mr. DeLaine in court . . .

"We told the police here where Mr. DeLaine was," Mr. Carey continued. "We said we would surrender him when he was wanted and we did so this morning. This man of God is not a fugitive from justice; he is a fugitive from injustice. We intend to fight extradition."

After Assistant District Attorney Thomas J. Samman concurred in the motion, Magistrate Ohringer paroled the defendant in Bishop Nichols' custody and adjourned the case until Dec. 28.

Mr. Carey said that when the extradition papers arrived from South Carolina, Governor Harriman would be asked not to sign them.

(*New York Times*, November 26)

NEW BOOKS

THE SYNAGOGUE AND ITS PEOPLE, By Desider Hol- isher, Abelard-Schuman, Inc., New York, N. Y. — \$4.50

THE FREEDOM READER, By Edwin S. Newman, Oceana Publications, New York, N. Y. — \$1.00

GOD'S KINGDOM IN MULTI-RACIAL SOUTH AFRICA — A Report on The Interracial Conference of Church Leaders, Johannesburg, December 7-10, 1954. Copies

may be secured from F. J. Van Wyk, P. O. Box 97, Johannesburg, South Africa

PREJUDICE AND YOUR CHILD, By Kenneth Clark, Bea- con Press, Boston, Mass., 1955 — \$2.50

CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO DE-SEGREGATION — A story of Social and Legal Change in America, By Herbert Hill and Jack Greenberg — Beacon Press, Boston, Mass., 1955 — \$2.50

THE FEARS MEN LIVE BY, By Selma Hirsh, Harper's, New York, N. Y., 1955 — \$2.75

New Leaflet

YOUR GOVERNMENT AND THE INDIAN is a new leaflet which has been prepared by the Bureau of Indian Affairs specifically for use by study groups in connection with the Indian American theme. It is available *without charge* upon request from: Haskell Institute, Lawrence, Kansas.

The matter in these pages is presented for the reader's information. Unless so stated, it is not to be construed as reflecting the attitudes or positions of the Department of Racial and Cultural Relations or of The National Council of Churches.

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE U.S.A.

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